

## An Interview with Rahju Michael Pereira on Aspects of Culture in Sri Lanka

Le Roy Robinson

Rahju Michael Pereira is a painter.

He was born on August 27, 1963. His father is a Sri Lankan businessman. His mother is a Norwegian who studied design.

He spent his early childhood in Kandy, where he began his primary school education at Trinity College.

In 1973 he went to Norway with his parents. He lived there for nine years. After regular schooling, he then went to Einar Granum's School of Art in Oslo for three years.

In 1982 Pereira returned to Sri Lanka. Living in Kandy, he is a fulltime painter who makes a living off his painting.

His work has been exhibited at the Lionel Wendt Gallery, the Alliance Francaise, and the University of Peradeniya.

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ROBINSON: Your appearance reminds me of that of an Indian holy man, long hair and keen questioning eyes. You live in a place called "Fool on a Hill", which is the title of a Beatles' song. You have been quoted as saying you are half Sri Lankan, half Norwegian, and fully Mad. What are you trying to say?

PEREIRA: I've also been quoted as saying: "I have often had the

pleasure of being called a madman and a dreamer. True, I live in dreams. Other people likewise live in dreams, but not their own. That's the difference".

You see, before I say anything else, I must make you aware that I am hardly any typical "aspect of culture" in Sri Lanka. I myself never use the name Rahju. I belong to the smallest minority here. I call them, us, "fusion heads", people who have been born out of currents from all over the world which meet on this island. Multinational, multicultural backgrounds.

For example, two other painters here of mixed parentage are George Keyt, whom I think you know a little about, whose father was Anglo-Indian and whose mother was Dutch, and David Paynter, who died in 1975, whose father was English and whose mother was Sinhalese. And it is, after all, a peculiar aspect of culture in Sri Lanka. The great art expert Ananada Coomaraswamy's father was a Ceylonese Tamil and his mother was English.

Anyway, to get back to your question of what I'm trying to say, I'll rewind the film for you.

My early childhood in Sri Lanka, mostly in Kandy, was spent in self-chosen isolation. I never felt I was "like the other kids", you know. So I started off pretty introverted. I was considered shy. But to me my solitude has always been my strength.

ROBINSON: In the largest sense, your paintings seem to have religious, or should I say philosophical connotations? Is that the result of your childhood training?

PEREIRA: I do not do any religious themes or paint any religious activity. To me religion stands in the way between oneself and allself, and has to be thrown aside so that true religiousness and freedom can come into being.

As for my childhood, at that time Buddhism had an impact on me. My grandmother, my father's mother, was heavily into it. She was a friend of some of the most brilliant monks of Theravada. Nyanaponika Thera, for one. Piyadassi Thera. They are both still living here in this jungle sanctuary, by the way. My grandmother would drag us kids to many temples in the Kandy area on the slightest occasion. I was the only one of the kids who loved it. All I had to do was to sit still and "meditate". I would sit still for ages.

But, really, the temples, the monks, the oil lamps, the chanting, the white, the orange and all that, struck something way down in me, and had a spontaneous response, a natural inclination towards Eastern spirituality. I remember those colors more than the objects they covered, the color in itself meant more to me.

ROBINSON: What happened when you went to Norway?

PEREIRA: When my parents decided to go to Norway, to leave for Norway was a big thrill, of course. All systems turn on, burn out. I mean, all the products of a high-tech consumer society simply blew my mind, the mind of a ten year old boy from Lanka.

But what was important was that in Norway I had the chance to develop. To strip off inhibitions without being badly hurt. I would flaunt my individuality no matter where, no matter what the price.

By inhibitions I mean the results of the tight, tied-down way of bringing up kids here. The insane, crippling educational and social limitations which still thrive in Sri Lanka can do much harm to a child's creative and mental health. In Norway I grew up without too many scars.

ROBINSON: I meant what happened to your natural inclination towards Eastern spirituality, as you put it, in Norway?

PEREIRA: Funny enough, it was in Norway that I was turned on to

Eastern thought again. From the age of thirteen onwards, the knowledge that there is something fundamentally wrong with the human condition started gnawing at me. It triggered off an intuitive revolt against anything set, defined, or accepted. This resulted in a wild search for values, new values. Through creative activity. Any creative activity — painting, experimenting with drugs, playing the lead guitar in plus 100 decibel rock groups, and, finally, meditation.

ROBINSON: Do you still play the guitar in rock groups?

PEREIRA: I've left the guitar behind and taken up the sitar. I have a lot of interest in classical Indian music. I find it has a lot in common with my thoughts, improvising and creating at the moment of creativity, not from any notated, pre-arranged static form. I've got some ideas to take the sitar into a new domain, but not until I can handle it well enough.

ROBINSON: How did your interest in meditation come about in Norway?

PEREIRA: At the age of sixteen, in my first year at art school, I got in contact with Maharish Mahesh Yogi's Transcendental Meditation. It, was a most revealing re-discovery of my being. From then on, I just dived into Hinduism, Yoga and Meditation.

During my last year in art school in Oslo, amidst all those people, I was an absolute hermit, spending a lot of time at the Tantric Yoga and Meditation School of Swami Janakananda. The time spent there shaped me a lot. As much as the moments in confronting my art work with my teacher, Einar Granum, did. There was always this feeling I had of unity, of parallel lines between art and spirituality, between art and being altogether.

ROBINSON: Who is Swami Janakananda?

PEREIRA: Originally Danish, he spent a long time in India under Swami Satyananda Saraswati, then founded his own School of Yoga

and Meditation with centers in Denmark, Sweden and Norway. Well adapted to present times while maintaining the ancient Tantric tradition.

ROBINSON: Would you say something about Einar Granum too?

PEREIRA: His school was private. Eclectic. Einar has been painting, teaching, lecturing on art his whole life. He's in his sixties now. He would always let the students find their own answers, while still providing a solid technical base to work from. As a teacher he was intense. Brilliant. Specially when he was drunk.

ROBINSON: What kind of art interested you at that time?

PEREIRA: I was soaked in influences. Surrealism. Yogic Mysticism. The idealism of flower—power, psychedelia. The most visible influence was that of the unavoidable Salvador Dali.

I was creating my own surreal vocabulary, in a very real, super-real, manner of painting. I was also trying out Tantric Yantras and other Yogic symbols. These ideas are manifesting themselves only now, years after. But from the start I've always been searching for this fusion line — east/west. Not in order to bring about a fusion of east/west, but to fuse beyond *any* definition as such. So by the time I was nineteen and had finished my art schooling, I was looking forward to getting back to Lanka with more eagerness than when I was looking forward to leaving nine years earlier.

ROBINSON: What impression did you have when you got back to Sri Lanka as an adult?

PEREIRA: The changes that had taken place on the island were startling, if that's what you mean. But I myself was not really so startled by it. I had visited Lanka once and had already seen what was happening and could feel the acceleration building up. I knew what to expect: Paradise going supermarket.

To my mind and eye, there has been no real progress on the island, merely an importation and glorification of values and life styles from places where the very same values have already begun to decay and stink, and, since adapted here, stink even worse.

ROBINSON: What do you find good in modern day Sri Lanka?

PEREIRA: The point is, this island has been blessed with everything it needs in its natural form. We don't need to modify, to synthesize, to pack into neat plastic bags and store in the freezer, to sit glued to the idiot box which keeps telling us we need all this shit. We have our own things, our own ways of food, of clothing, of natural materials, building and architecture, agriculture, handicrafts.

The magic of Serendip, Taprobane, Ceylon, Lanka — the magic remains, will always remain for those who are in tune to it. It's an unspeakable thing, which has attracted seekers, thinkers, creators, and weirdos from all over at all times.

ROBINSON: What did you do when you returned to Kandy?

PEREIRA: I continued my semi-hermit existence here. I've always loved the Kandyan hills, especially in the early morning. I started painting away. Still surreal, but surreal with a spiritual quest. Very romantic. In the spiritual sense. Romantic, dark paintings — influences from Rabindranath Tagore. Influence is the wrong word. It's more like Tagore was saying the stuff I was trying to paint at the time. The joy and struggle of being, and all that stuff, you know.

As I mentioned, in the midst of Kandy, behind the Temple of the Tooth, there is a small jungle sancturay. I lived next door to it. This sanctuary was a daily source of inspiration. Several canvases were born out of my roamings there. The jungle would really teach me, talk to me. You know what I mean?

ROBINSON: I have visited that sanctuary, but, unfortunately, the jungle

did not talk to me. But I seem to see a lot of snake — like forms in some of your paintings, like the Joy of Life.

PEREIRA: The canvases of that period are full of images of creepers and plants entwined in struggle/harmony with barbed wire. Faces hide in the sky, in the jungle foliage. There are struggling snake — hands. Bodies stretch in longing, twisting and turning, entwined in roots and creepers. Is it a dance or a struggle? Or is the dance a struggle? The struggle a dance? Are they separable? These were the things I was grappling with. The duality. Its conflict. Its fusion.

ROBINSON: What was the reaction of people here to those paintings when you exhibited them?

PEREIRA: I had my first exhibition at the Lionel Wendt Gallery. As you probably know, apart from the National Gallery, the Wendt is the only real gallery we've got. But the Alliance Francaise helps local artists to exhibit.

ROBINSON: There are several private art galleries in Colombo.

PEREIRA: The private galleries — there are actually very few — are more or less surviving by selling antiques to five — star tourists. They prefer to patronize “postcard” painters. But there isn't really any lack of galleries. The art circle here is so small.

Anyway, to answer your question, the exhibition at the Wendt blew open a few eyes and created a lot of good waves, especially since I was doing something unlike any other. I found our Lankan art public to be encouragingly receptive and open to symbolism.

ROBINSON: Would you describe the “art scene” in Sri Lanka?

PEREIRA: Well, in the first place, there is no such thing as an art scene here, though “arty” people in Colombo enjoy throwing the phrase around. This can partly be traced back to ignorance and lack of public interest. But I find the fault to be much more with the artists

themselves. The public and news—media are catching up, though there is a lot lacking in art knowledge, especially among many of those who write about art in our newspapers. But this is, I pray, only an initial stage and will improve.

ROBINSON: The artists?

PEREIRA: Our artists are the most uninspiring bunch I've ever run across. Apart from a couple of friends whom I can discuss painting with, many of the artists I have met talk about one and the something: how poor they are, how they're struggling, how nobody's buying, and so on and so on.

ROBINSON: Aren't these legitimate complaints?

PEREIRA: You see, the problem is simply that the whole idea of Art and its activities, Art for Art's Sake, you know, is a recent and still foreign element to Lanka. In Europe it developed from the days of the Renaissance, when the artists first started stepping forward as individuals, up to the Modern Art of today. A naturally evolving process, which has taken centuries.

Here in Lanka the painting tradition has always united itself to either religious or decorative purposes. "Art" was imported during colonial days. Our painters have been exposed to the Western art of today without any knowledge of the whole underlying process which has brought it to its present state. The artist here is left with the impression that art is an activity where "anything goes". So he happily takes off from the point where the genius of Picasso or Kandinsky took a lifetime to reach. He labels his work "abstract" and feels very important about it. The public in general, very rightly, refuse to take this sloppy activity seriously, causing the prevailing lack of interest. There is also the small "arty" public who will applaud any junk as long as it makes them feel cultured. Being "cultured" is a very up-



per – class thing, you know.

ROBINSON: What about the art market then?

PEREIRA: Art market? No such thing exists. Simply, the same guy who is telling you about the hardships of his life as a painter, will also tell you, between sobs, that the price of this or that painting of his is 10, 000 rupees or 50,000 rupees or anywhere from there to infinity.

You see, in this too we are only exposed to the most sensational art news from the West. So when de Kooning or somebody hits the front page with a one and a half million dollar sale, then our own guy automatically goes: Wow, then my painting must be worth at least a lakh. 100,000 rupees. Hilarious! These prices quench any possibility of kindling an art market here.

The fact is, most of these guys are not living off their painting. There are only a handful of us serious painters who dare to live on our art alone. The rest are employed in some educational or government institute or some company or other. These hobby painters by taking themselves too seriously ridicule and bring down the overall quality of the Sri Lankan “art scene”.

ROBINSON: Would you comment briefly then on some of the serious painters in Sri Lanka?

PEREIRA: You know that to talk about paintings doesn’t really get us any closer to the visual fact, does it? But I’ll give you some comments on some of the artists I know personally.

I hardly need to comment on George Keyt. As you know, he’s already gone down in art history. He lives in a village near Kandy. I love the spontaneity and freedom of his work. Like playing a *raga*, he keeps endlessly playing and varying the tune, and it always comes out fresh and alive. George works with a strong, bold line defining large shapes and rounded contours with strong fresh lines of color filling in.

A certain similarity with cubism is present, but all the images are Indian and Lankan. A lot of his inspiration has come from places like Indian temple sculptures. Feminine shapes, dancers, lovers — — in a very rhythmic arrangement, and always refreshingly sensual.

Tilak Abeysinghe, who got educated in art in Italy, has put down a lot of solid work. Sensitive color abstractions and gentle movements. He also works a lot with female / flowing / dancing shapes, though in a more non — figurative, and gentler fashion. His colors are of a very pastel — like light hue. The contours that are so strong in Keyt's work give way in Tilak's and tend to diffuse into the realm of abstraction. The movement, the rhythm of his picture is more slow and fluid. He must be in his late 60s now. He lives outside Colombo but has a studio in Milan, Italy.

Laki Senanayake has the most organic line I've ever see flow out of a human hand. Laki is a plant freak, and his place outside Colombo is over — populated with them. His work is of natural images, working mostly with the line — — charcoal, chalks, inks. He's in his thirties.

The last time I saw his work, S. H. Sarath was turning out some inspiring, strong oil paintings. Energetic. Semi — abstract. His drawings fall short in comparison to his brushwork. His brushwork, in slightly muted colors, is handled with oil paint in a very diluted form, almost like water colors, being able to leave the imprint of the brushstroke on the canvas, letting the paint flow freely, sometimes transparent, revealing other colors and strokes beneath. Most of his work is non — figurative. He's young. Born in 1949 in a South Coast village, he now lives close to Colombo.

Seevali Ilangesinghe has a magical touch. The kind Chagall and Klee possessed. Seevali also lives close to Colombo but came out of a jungle village in Vanniya and has remained in tune with his "jungle

spirit” and turned out some lovely haunting pictures. Nowadays, though, a touch of stagnation seems to be haunting him. His works are all jungle—like scenes, densely packed with mingling bodies and plants, the shapes echoing each other and fusing into an organic whole. A close up, magnified glimpse into his own subconscious jungle interior. He always breaks up his colors into greys and browns, adding a very mysterious atmosphere to his images. He’s between thirty and forty. The Sapumal Foundation helped Seevali to get started as a painter.

Wijeykulatileke Nayananda is the most fascinating to me. He’s the most neglected painter on the island. During his years in jail...

ROBINSON: Jail?

PEREIRA: Because of his activities in the 1971 Uprising. I don’t know exactly what he did in 1971. A topic we’ve never brought up, though we talked a lot about his time in jail.

ROBINSON: I’ll look him up in A. C. Alles’s *Insurgency* 1971.

PEREIRA: In jail he took up painting more and more. He dropped the unreality of politics. His images are terribly beautiful. Horribly splendid. An exhilarating bad trip to Nirvana. Naya got taken up with Picasso and the cubists and developed his own hard edged aggressive form of surreal cubism, which suited his glorious, terror—filled images. His colors are so vivid they’ll blind you. He likes working in oil, but his water colors are better. His sketchbook from jail has some unbearably strong drawings— — inside looking out.

When Naya was released from jail in 1977, the architect Ashley de Vos, one of the people who helped him out, set him up in a lovely old house on the West Coast called the Gallery. Naya has been living and working there since.

ROBINSON: Why do you say he is neglected as a painter?

PEREIRA: He's neglected because he doesn't help himself. He has never attempted to exhibit. Therefore, he is unheard of. Must be about thirty—five years old now.

ROBINSON: You implied that your first exhibition, at the Lionel Wendt Gallery, was an artistic success. What did you do after that?

PEREIRA: After the exhibition, I moved down south. To Taprobane Island. No matter what you compare it with, it is one of the loveliest spots on earth. I spent six enchanted months there. The painting I did during that period was not really that good, but it was important. The dark paintings gave way. The canvas started brightening up. I was entering a new phase of work.

Then I went back to Kandy. I had exhibitions in Kandy and at the University of Peradeniya.

ROBINSON: What was the reason for this change in your style of painting?

PEREIRA: I was inspired to stir and search further. This inspiration was intensified by the influence of Jiddu Krishnamurti. I had started to digest his writings more and more. I was finally released from the Dali influence, and Krishnamurti's writings became the strongest external influence on my life.

ROBINSON: What was the effect upon your painting?

PEREIRA: My earlier paintings were open to interpretation. A hidden meaning could be coaxed out of the imagery. But never fixed nor static. Flexible and reflective. So the importance lay in the viewer's participation or communication with the painting, thus reflecting the mind of the viewer. "The living mirror". So at that stage, meaning, intuitive understanding in order to gain insight into oneself, was of importance.

In the second phase I was attempting to transcend meaning altogether. Meaning is merely an activity of mind in order to twist and turn reality to suit our hopes, values, ideals, fears. Obviously, freedom could not be found within the limits of meaning, not within any limit of any kind. Mind's limiting activity has to be still for it to know what reality really is. To know the unknown.

My idea with the paintings was to use the human mind and its associative, grasping quality in order to de-associate the mind through symbols which were so evocative, yet so flexible, so open, that they would evade any form of understanding, would remain ungraspable. Bringing the mind, which can find no escape through reason or understanding, no final solution, to a still. To what is. And then *see*. Not to look for something. Not to see what the mind thinks it sees. But to see what really is.

ROBINSON: After you reached that point what did you do?

PEREIRA: For a period of a few months I lived in my father's house. Then I started living completely alone. I had a productive year. I kept refining both my ideas and my technique. Continuing on the search for the unknown. The imagery of the paintings turned more simple, more refined, and more striking than ever. The illusory appearing real. Reality appearing illusory. I exhibited the results of this two-year phase of work at the Lionel Wendt again. There was a tremendous response from the viewers. As far as I could feel, I had achieved to transcend words and meaning. But I felt I had to move further.

Physically, I moved further up the mountain where I live now. Up to 5,000 feet. I live with two lifelong loves: mountains and clouds. And two cats. I'm entering a new phase of work.

ROBINSON: What are you trying to do in your painting these days, in your latest phase?

PEREIRA: O. K. Let's get back to the future. Let's have a look at the latest phase.

What am I trying to do? Simple. I'm trying to move with the moment of creativity, the here and the now, which is being created every moment, ever lasting and ever ending.

ROBINSON: It does not seem simple to me.

PEREIRA: I think we'll have to make a slow detour back to the seed—state and see if I can explain. Do you mind a long short—cut? No?

O. K. Look. Reality is here and now. This moment in time, this moment in space. This moment never existed a moment ago, this moment will never exist a moment from now. This moment exists. Past and future are man—made, born out of the movement of mind. You see, mind is always on the run between past and future, constantly attempting to manipulate the moment through past conditioning, in order to reach some future ideal, some future gain, or goal. Always attempting to shape the moment. Never letting the moment take shape, the mind never knows reality.

So mind, through its activity, is always in friction with the moment of being. From this basic friction spring all frictions, all the pain and suffering of human existence. Mind can never know what is, since it is always seeing according to what was, always seeing according to what it expects and hopes will be. It only knows the struggle, the violence of the ambitious mind. It only knows the desperate clinging to the past, the fear of the future. This violence, this conflict, is born out of mind's movement away from the real movement. The movement of the moment. So reality never turns out to be what we want it to be, since, once it has become, we are active in the unreality of past and and future, and, therefore, suffer. Suffer the pain of unreality, out

of which further activity, further suffering, and so on, so on, so on. The original illusion is that of past and future, out of which the notion of ego arises. This ego, in order to maintain itself, has to keep up this illusion. But the fact is, one cannot shape what Is. What Is shapes oneself. One has to drop out of the past and future, turn on to the moment, and tune into the movement, the flow.

ROBINSON: I don't seem to be tuning into the flow here.

PEREIRA: The flow? Yes. You see, the fascinating thing is that this moment is always in motion, eternally still and moving. The very instant the moment is born, it is gone...since it is but a moment, and the very instant it's gone, it's born. This permanent impermanence is the flow of reality, the river of Is. The substance of being. Ever ending and never ending, eternally still and moving.

So a mind which is free, which is in tune to the unknown moment, is a mind which is still and moving. That is, a mind which does not cling. Which lives and dies with every living – dying moment. To give up the past, every moment. To accept the future, every moment. This is the only mystery of freedom: To be able to give as freely as one accepts, and to accept as freely as one gives.

ROBINSON: What does this philosophy have to do with your creation of works of art?

PEREIRA: Only when there is freedom from the ego, from the manipulative activity of mind, can creativity come into being. All action that springs from this freedom springs naturally and spontaneously. Not acting from any planned action, nor for any gain in the future, but activated for the sake of the action. The motivation being the action itself is thus pure action, true creativity.

This moment of creativity is what I'm painting with now.

But you have to understand that "I" do not paint. "I" do not do a

thing. When one becomes one with the moment, all things are one. When the mind stops turning back and forth between what was created a moment ago and what is going to be created a moment from now, there is no longer a creator or the created. There is only the *happening*, the *act of creativity*.

There is no longer the attempt to shape. There is only the letting it take shape. You see, like these trees and plants, they have no blueprint to follow, no right or wrong, and they grow naturally right. And these clouds you see passing by my window, each one a perfect shape, have no idea about such a thing as perfection, thus attaining perfection. Likewise the creative process. Likewise the process of being. Likewise freedom.

ROBINSON: What about your paintings themselves?

PEREIRA: Due to my turn on, canvases have simplified themselves further. Washing away all the earlier symbolic images: butterflies, hands, cracks in the wall, profiles— —all are gone. Only the clouds remain. At the moment, I'm in the midst of a blue/white phase. The clouds: intangible freedom. Blue: the color of empty space, upon the white void. The images are clearer, more "real" than ever, but simplified to "instant" images. To make the picture look like it was made in a flash, whereas there really lie weeks of work behind it. To reveal the moment, in a moment.

Let me tell you what happened here the other day. An eagle came soaring in beside my mountain top. It flew all the way south till I could barely see it anymore and then came back in a large half—circle covering an area of several miles. Not once during this flight did the eagle move its wings, not once did it twitch a feather, but remained perfectly still, being able to make that vast movement perfectly still and moving.



ROBINSON: One last topic for now. Although you live very much like a hermit and paint pictures that are admittedly difficult to grasp by most people, a few years ago you were the center of a raging controversy when your commissioned drawing on the cover of the People's Bank publication *Economic Review* provoked heated opposition from some members of the Buddhist clergy and Sri Lankan President Junius R. Jayawardene forced the People's Bank to suspend the editor of the *Economic Review* and withdraw from circulation all its copies with your "sacrilegious" drawing.

Your drawing was entitled "Towards Machine Intelligence" and showed a monk-like figure in a sitting position under a tree, but the figure seemed partially a robot and partially a computer too. A representative of the Buddhist clergy, using a penname, complained that your illustration insulted Buddha and Buddhism by suggesting that computer intelligence was superior to the wisdom of Buddha and Buddhism.

*The Island* editorialized in your defense that your illustration embodies the tension between tradition and modernization in Sri Lanka and could not be described as sacrilegious..

S. T. G. Fernando, Chairman of the People's Bank, himself said the drawing was in bad taste, and, obeying President Jayawardene, ordered an inquiry.

What was the upshot of all that?

PEREIRA: I finally got the last word.

After the inquiry was over — the verdict was not guilty — the editor was given back his job, and the *Daily News* finally dared to print what I had written about my picture and the controversy about it.

ROBINSON: What did you say?

PEREIRA: I pointed out that the drawing was not about religion but

about technological progress in Sri Lanka, and its impact on our culture, so, as a surrealist painter, I chose to show the conflict between the computer representing modern technology and a hermit representing the ancient quest for enlightenment.

I pointed out that I am not opposed to modern technology nor to traditional values. My drawing asks a question: Is it possible for the two together to fulfill each other?

ROBINSON: The story as a story is fascinating.

PEREIRA: Maybe. But the whole story typifies the prevailing low—pressure atmosphere that lies over present day Sri Lanka. I'm talking about a most unencouraging, depressing stagnation, which refuses to look at its root problems, and tries to turn a blind eye, and looks upon anything new and refreshing with horror, especially if it comes from a young person. It's suffocative, truly suffocative.

However, the colonial generation is dying out. One hopes for positive open action from the younger generation. In fact, I can see more and more young people taking over, especially in Colombo. A generation change is on. I can't say exactly what the change is, nor its effects, I can only feel it coming.

ROBINSON: Finally, how do you manage to survive alone with only two cats at 5000 feet?

PEREIRA: With utmost ease and bliss. I've got all I need. I've got my head up in the clouds, and my feet down on the ground.